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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effects of enthusiastic teaching on the listening comprehension skills of kindergarten children. Subjects were 26 kindergartners who were evenly divided into experimental and control groups. Twelve pieces of literature were read to each group 3 days a week for 4 weeks. Teachers read to the experimental group in a highly enthusiastic manner and to the control group in an unenthusiastic manner. After each story, a test was administered in an effort to gauge the effect of teacher enthusiasm on children's listening comprehension. Findings indicated that enthusiastic teaching did not significantly affect children's listening comprehension skills. An extensive review of the related literature provided information on the definition of enthusiasm, instruments developed to rate enthusiasm in teachers, studies of enthusiasm, listening comprehension, the importance of literature and reading aloud in improving listening comprehension, and development of listening skills by the method of asking children questions after reading aloud to them. Related materials, such as measures used and a list of the children's books read, are appended. A total of 46 references are cited. (RH)

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The Effect of Enthusiastic Teaching on the Listening Comprehension of Kindergarten Children

by Adele C. Wineburgh

A Research Project Report

Presented in fulfillment of the requirements of the Research Project Course in the Graduate Program of Education at Mercer University in Atlanta

Atlanta, Georgia

1990

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Acknowledgements

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thoughts that I dedicate this paper to all my little kindergarten friends.

In presenting this research project report in fulfillment of the requirements for the research project course at Mercer University in Atlanta, I agree that the Division of Education shall make it available for the inspection and circulation in accordance with its regulations governing materials of this type. I agree that permission to copy from this project report may be granted by the Chairman of the Division of Education when copying is solely for scholarly purposes and does not involve potential financial gain. It is understood that any copying from this project report which involves potential financial gain will not be allowed without written permission.

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Signature of Student

Abstract

The Effect of Enthusiastic Teaching

on the Listening Comprehension of

Kindergarten Children

Purpose

This experimental study was designed to examine the effects of enthusiasm on the listening comprehension skills of kindergarten students.

Methods and Procedures

The sample was a total of 26 kindergarten students, thirteen in the experimental group and thirteen in the control group. Students were assigned by a table of random numbers. Twelve pieces of literature were selected to be read to each group for a four week period, three days per week. The experimental group was read to in a high enthusiastic approach; the control group was read to in a low enthusiastic approach.

A posttest was administered after each story to test the effect of teacher enthusiasm on the listening comprehension of the students involved in the study. A t-test was performed at the .05 level of significance to determine if there was a significant difference in the mean scores of the two groups involved in the study. It was concluded that there was no significant difference to the mean scores of these test groups.

Results

The statistical results was based on one two tailed t-tests at the

.05 level of significance with twenty-four degrees of freedom. A t-score of 2.064 was needed to establish a significant difference between the mean gain scores. As a result of the findings, it was concluded that enthusiastic teaching did not significantly affect the listening comprehension skills of kindergarten students.

Conclusions

Based on the data as presented in the study, it was concluded that there was no significant difference in the listening comprehension of skills of kindergarten students who were read aloud to in an enthusiastic approach and those who were read aloud to in a lethargic, unenthusiastic approach.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Teaching styles are as varied as teachers. Some teachers display a high level of energy, while others are very lethargic. Some teachers are very strict disciplinarians; others are more relaxed and give their students an opportunity to express themselves in a creative manner (Malcolm, 1977). Some teachers are enthusiastic and show this enthusiasm through hand gestures, facial expressions, voice inflection, mobility, and other features thought to be associated with enthusiastic teaching (Oldham, 1977). Other teachers display little enthusiasm. Their voices are monotonous, they lack facial and hand expression, and some are limited in movement among their students.

Hamachek (1969, cited in Hansen, 1981) concludes that a good teacher is a good person who enjoys himself or herself, one who communicates enthusiasm, and one who understands his or her role in the relationship with the class.

The researcher and her co-worker in the project present an enthusiastic approach in their kindergarten class. The program uses literature as a vehicle for all areas of study. These areas include language arts, social studies, science, and math. Literature provides early childhood teachers an opportunity to present these areas of study in an interesting and creative manner. Joel (1987) states that children's literature is a valued resource in developing children's listening comprehension.

Enthusiasm allows the student to feel the excitement of the author. Enthusiasm also allows the young student to feel the excitement of the teacher and the importance of the material that is presented.

There is little research, however, on the relationship between enthusiasm and its effect on early childhood listening comprehension skills. The question remains: How does teacher enthusiasm affect the different levels of listening comprehension, which include: literal (recall); inferential; critical; and creative?

This paper will focus on enthusiastic teaching and its effects on listening comprehension skills of early childhood learners.

Statement of the Research Problem

The research for the present study was conducted in an attempt to examine the effects of enthusiastic teaching on listening skills of kindergarten students. Reading aloud appropriate literature selections was the method of treatment used to examine listening comprehension of kindergarten students. The specific research question was: Is there a significant difference in the listening comprehension of students who have been read aloud to in an enthusiastic approach and kindergarten students who have been read aloud to in a lethargic, unenthusiastic approach.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made prior to the experimental treatment.

1. Attendance in both groups will be stable during the four week course of study.

2. The teachers will be present for each session.

3. The two groups were equivalent in age and socioeconomic background.

4. The two groups were assumed to have appropriate listening skills for their age level.

5. The literature selected was appropriate for kindergarten age children.

6. The teacher-made instruments used in the study were a valid and reliable measures of listening comprehension.

Delimitations

In order to narrow the scope of this research, certain delimitations were imposed.

1. The study was limited to 26 kindergarten students from a suburban public school.

2. The children in both the experimental and the control group are members of a predetermined heterogeneous intact kindergarten class.

3. The students were familiar with the reading style of the investigator and her co-worker.

4. The study was limited to a four week period, three sessions per week.

5. The story time will take place approximately 9:00 AM to 9:20 AM on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of each week.

6. The time of the questioning session for the control and experimental group was immediately following the story time.

Definition of Terms

Enthusiasm: A word originating from the Greek enthousiasmos which meant to inspire certain kinds of positive feelings residing within a person (McKinney, 1989).

Overt Enthusiasm: Teacher behaviors which communicate the appearance of enthusiasm (McKinney, 1984).

High Enthusiasm: A group of behaviors characterized by gesturing, movement about the room, vocal inflections, and various facial expressions (Land, 1980).

Low Enthusiasm: A group of behaviors characterized by absence of gestures, no movement about the room, little or no vocal inflection, and almost an absence of facial expression (Land, 1980).

High Inference Enthusiasm: Term used when the frequency of the teacher characteristic being rated is estimated and not observed directly or counted (Oldham, 1982).

Low Inference Enthusiasm: Term used when the frequency of the teacher characteristic being observed is directly observable and counted (Oldham, 1982).

Chapter II

Related Research Review

Literature and research related to this present study will be reviewed in this section. The purpose of this review was to examine findings and understandings in an attempt to understand if teacher enthusiasm affects listening comprehension skills of early childhood learners. Two major areas of literature and research have been reviewed. The first area covered is the area of enthusiasm, with an emphasis on the definition of enthusiasm and the importance of how enthusiasm affects pupil achievement, including listening comprehension. The second area covered is the area of listening comprehension, with an emphasis on the components of listening, the use of literature and its effects on listening comprehension, and levels of listening comprehension.

Definition of Enthusiasm

Teachers like actors are concerned with influencing people. They must employ qualities which enhance communication. They must produce a classroom atmosphere which compels the attention and interest of their audience (Gillett, 1982).

The word "enthusiasm" originates from the Greek enthousiasmos which means to inspire (Webster, 1986). Other dictionary meanings, include "a state of impassioned emotion... ecstasy... strong excitement... feeling on behalf of a cause or subject". Consequently a person who displays enthusiasm conveys a

sense of excitement. The internal emotional state is conveyed through external acts (Gillett, 1982).

One of the most durable assumptions in American education is that enthusiasm is characteristic of superior teachers. More than 50 years ago, Barr (1929, cited in Larkins, McKinney, Oldham-Buss, & Gilmore, 1985) concluded that "a good teacher of the social studies motivates her work... is pleasant... smiles appreciatively... and laughs with the class from time to time... is enthusiastic... and possesses a good sense of humor" (p. 115).

Despite the great amount of research on enthusiastic teaching the concept still lacks a commonly accepted definition. Individual researchers have used a variety of high and low inference descriptions to identify enthusiastic teaching. High inference descriptions include exciting, dynamic, or stimulating. Low inference descriptions include smiling and joking (Caruso, 1982).

Instruments Developed to Rate Enthusiasm in Teachers

Emmer (1973) developed the Classroom Observation Scales (COS). The COS contains twelve rating scales, each of which is designed to measure a different variable, one of which is enthusiasm. The COS Enthusiasm subscale reproduced from Emmer is as follows:

> This scale is used to judge the extent to which the teacher displays interest, vitality, and involvement in his subject and his instruction.

1. Very low enthusiasm. The teacher's behavior is lethargic, dull, routine, a minimum of vocal inflection, gesturing, movement, or change in facial features. The teacher appears to lack interest in what he is doing.
2. Low enthusiasm. Between very low and moderate.
3. Moderate enthusiasm. Occasionally the teacher seems interested and involved; some display of activity, such as gesturing. Sometimes the teacher appears to lack vigor, is dull or routine.
4. High enthusiasm. Between moderate and very high.
5. Very high enthusiasm. The teacher is stimulating, energetic, and very alert. He seems interested and involved in what he is teaching; moves around, gestures, inflects voice (p. 5).

Larkins, et al. (1985) concluded that the COS is a single item rating which seems to assume that enthusiasm is a unidimensional construct, although the descriptors on the scale contain mixtures of high and low inference indicators on enthusiasm. Low inference indicators include mobility, facial expression, gestures, and voice inflection. High inference indicators include stimulating, energetic, and very alert.

Collins (1978) developed the Peer Teaching Observation Instrument (PTOI). This instrument uses the following eight variables (shown in Table 1) to identify, measure, and communicate high enthusiasm. Larkins et al. (1985) states that the instrument uses basically a low inference variable and is complex to use (refer to Table 1).

A study was conducted by Collins (1978) to determine whether or not a training intervention in teacher enthusiasm could increase the level of teacher enthusiasm of preservice teachers. This study does not conclude that all teachers should attain a

specific level of teacher enthusiasm to be effective. It does provide a method for teachers of at any level to study the variables, measure their performance, and add teacher enthusiasm to their repertoire of teaching skills.

Analysis of the data indicates that the overall performance of the experimental group significantly increased after training and each of the variables contributed significantly to this increase.

Table 1

Peer Teaching Observation Instrument

Descriptors For the Eight Variables That Convey Enthusiasm				
	1 Low	2	3 Medium	4 5 High
1. Vocal Delivery	Monotone voice, minimum vocal inflection, little variations in speech, drones on and on and on, poor articulation.	Pleasant variations of pitch, volume and speed, good articulation.		Great and sudden changes from rapid excited speech to a whisper. Varied lilting, uplifting intonation. Many changes in tone, pitch.
2. Eyes	Looked dull or bored. Seldom opened eyes wide or raised	Appeared interested Some changes to lighting up, shining opening wide.		Characterized as dancing, shining, lighting up frequently opening wide, eyebrows raised.

(Table continues)

3. Gestures	Seldom moved arms out or outstretched toward person or object. Never used sweeping movements, kept arms at side or folded across body, appeared rigid.	Often pointed with hand, using total arm. Occasionally used sweeping motion using body, head, arms & face. Steady motion using body, head, arms, & face. Steady pace of gesturing is maintained.	Quick and demonstrative movements of body, head, arms, hands & face, i.e., sweeping motions, clapping hands, head nodding rapidly.
4. Body Movements	Seldom moved from one spot or movement mainly from a sitting position to a standing position.	Moved freely, slowly and steadily.	Large body movements, swung around, walked rapidly, changed pace, unpredictable energetic.
5. Facial Expression	Appeared dead-pan, doesn't denote feeling or frowned most of the time. Little smiling or a one-second lips upturned. Lips closed.	Agreeable, smiled frequently and longer plus at a regular rate. Looked pleased, happy, sad when obviously called for.	Appeared vibrant, demonstrative showed surprise, awe, sadness, joy, thoughtfulness, excitement. Total smile-mouth opened wide, quick and sudden changes in expression.
6. Word Selection	Mostly nouns, few descriptors/adjectives.	Some descriptors/ adjectives or repetition of the	High descriptive, many adjectives, great variety.

(Table continues)

7. Acceptance of Ideas and Feelings	Little indication of acceptance or encouragement, may ignore student's feelings or ideas.	Accepts ideas and feelings, praises or clarifies, some variations in response but frequently repeats same ones.	Quick and ready to accept, praise, encourage or clarify, many variations in response. Vigorous nodding of head when agreeing.
8. Overall Energy Level	Lethargic, appeared inactive, dull or sluggish.	Some variations from high to low in appearing energetic, demonstrative but mostly an even level is maintained.	Exuberant. Maintained high degree of energy and vitality, highly demonstrative, great and sudden changes in voice, tone, pitch, eye, head, arm and body movements (p.15).

Rolider (1979) defined enthusiasm as a group of behaviors that include 15 categories. The Teacher Enthusiasm Observation System (TEOS) is designed to focus on nonlecture teaching; it was created to be used with physical education teachers. The TEOS is an instrument that includes only low inference behaviors. The 15 categories include:

1. Joking
2. Smiling and laughing
3. Keep students busy, actively engaged most of the time
4. Various types of positive feedback, encourages students
5. Participates with students in activity
6. Offers variety of activities
7. Maximizes participation
8. Appropriately dressed
9. Voice inflection (rate and punctuation)

10. Teacher changes position in gym
11. Lesson plan and equipment ready
12. Gestures
13. Hustling to increase pace of activity
14. Touching
15. Teacher modeling (Larkins, et al., 1985, p. 14)

Oldham-Buss (1982) concludes that enthusiasm is based on low inference (observable) behavior. These include gesturing with hands, arms, or shoulders; mobility of instructor, head gestures and facial expressions including smiles, frowns, nodding, voice inflection and rate of speech, and commitment, flamboyance and momentum of teacher instruction (McKinney, Larkins, & Burts, 1984). Oldham-Buss (1982) developed an instrument called The Enthusiastic Teaching Observation Instrument (ETOI). The ETOI is complex, uses multiple formats, and uses indicators that are directly observable (Larkins, et al., 1985). The ETOI is reproduced in Table 2.

Table 2

Enthusiastic Teaching Observation Instrument

Subinstrument I: Gesturing with hands, arms, or shoulders
Item
A. Instructional gesturing, such as: pointing, waving, shaking finger or fist, throwing arms in the air, letting arms fall to side, hunching or shrugging shoulders, using hands to illustrate size or distance, etc.
B. Mannerisms, such as: nervous twitches, scratching, picking nose, wiping brow with forearm, pulling ear lobe, brushing clothing or hair, etc.
C. Rating: vigor of instructional gestures,
High 4 3 2 None

(Table continues)

Subinstrument II: Mobility

Item

A. Instructional mobility, such as: moving to chalkboard, map, etc., to write or illustrate a point; moving to pupil side to check work, control pupil, etc; moving to better vantage point to communicate with pupil, such as to allow a better line of vision, etc.

B. Noninstructional mobility, such as: pacing about or rocking back and forth for other than instructional purposes.

C. Rating: teacher moves among students.

High 4 3 2 None

Subinstrument III: Head gestures and facial expressions

Item

A. Head gestures and facial expressions, such as: nodding, shaking or tilting head, etc., smiles, frowns, arches eyebrows, laughs, sighs, etc.

B. Mannerisms of the head and face, such as: twitches, sniffs, licks lips.

C. Rating: vigor of head gestures and facial expressions.

High 4 3 2 None

Subinstrument IV: Voice inflection and rate of speech

Item

A. Rating: teacher's use of voice inflection.

High 4 3 2 None

B. Rating: teacher's rate of speech.

High 4 3 2 None

(Table continues)

Subinstrument V: Commitment, flamboyance and momentum

Item

A. Teacher verbalizes commitment to subject or teaching, by: pointing out that an idea or activity is intellectually challenging, interesting, important, or enjoyable; encouraging students to analyze or tackle problems.

B. Teacher does or says something flamboyant/colorful, such as: tells a non-malicious joke or provides or participates in some other source of humor; presents material opposed to commonly accepted attitudes; uses shocking information; plays the ham; uses overstatement or exaggeration; plays the devil's advocate; uses emotive terms.

C. Teacher produces stops or breaks in proceedings, by: pausing before a change in activities; losing place or train of thought; overdwelling, nagging, or preaching on student misbehavior, explanations or directions; maintaining attention on interruptions such as announcements over the intercom, etc. (fails to return to teaching task following an interruption).

D. Rating: Level of teaching momentum.

High 4 3 2 None

(p. 24)

Caruso (1982) defines teacher enthusiasm as an affective state displayed by the teacher while performing the act of teaching. Flanagan's Critical Incident Technique was used to obtain information systematically from secondary school teachers enrolled in physical education classes. Caruso states that enthusiastic teaching is defined not only by a set of characteristics but also by the delivery of those characteristics. The results from Caruso's study, indicate that enthusiasm is more than isolated behaviors, such as gesturing, cheering, and joking. Enthusiasm is a grouping of verbal and non-verbal behaviors that communicate specific attitudes toward students. When enthusiastic

and unenthusiastic teaching incidents were described by the students; they showed behaviors generally considered "enthusiastic" were used in both types of teaching. Both enthusiastic and unenthusiastic teachers may joke, cheer, and use gestures.

Caruso (1982) concludes that the difference between an enthusiastic and unenthusiastic teacher is communicated to the students not by isolated behaviors, but by grouped teaching behaviors. The behaviors, which students in physical education classes most frequently describe as characteristic of enthusiasm, are identified as participation, encouragement, and praise. Larkins, et al. (1985) reports that Caruso did not develop a specific instrument to measure enthusiasm. The categories developed by Caruso might be useful to those contemplating instrument development. Caruso's categories are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Enthusiastic Category

Teachers and Students:
- Animation
- Creation of a Positive Climate
- Demonstration
- Encouragement
- Humor
- Ingenuity and Innovation
- Insistence
- Interest and Involvement in Subject
- Momentum
- Participation
- Praise and Feedback
- Role-playing
- Seeking Student Input

Teachers Only
- Spontaneity

Students Only
- Constructive Criticism
- Equality
- Interest in Students
- Organization

Non Enthusiastic Categories

Teachers and Students
- Detachment
- Disinterest
- Frustration-Anger
- Frustration-Quitting
- Mechanization/Depersonalization
- Negative Feedback
- Stalling
- Threat

Teachers Only
- Anxiety-Retreat
- Negativism Toward Subject Matter

Students Only
- Creation of Negative Climate
- Discrimination
- Ignoring Students Behaviors
- Lack of Participation
- Withdrawal (Caruso, 1982, p. 10)

Enthusiasm Studies

The researcher attempted to locate studies that correlated teacher enthusiasm and its effects on listening comprehension with early childhood learners. This relationship has not been extensively investigated but several studies have been conducted concerning teacher enthusiasm and its effect on student achievements (Larkins et al., 1985).

Stevens (1967, cited in Rosenshine, 1970) hypothesized that effective teaching depends upon "lively interests of teachers" (p. 151). Rosenshine (1970) attempted to assess the relationship of enthusiasm to pupil achievement. An important element of his research is the effect of both high inference and low inference measures that can be used together for effective teaching.

A high inference study was conducted by Mastin (1963). The study was conducted for two days. Teacher enthusiasm was manipulated as an independent variable. Sixth and seventh grade students were taught with lectures given by 20 teachers in the subject area of social studies. Rosenshine (1970) indicates that each teacher was instructed to teach one lesson with enthusiasm "in such a manner as to convey to his pupils that he was enthusiastic about the ideas that covered the lesson" (p. 385). Each teacher was instructed to teach the other lesson with indifference; that is, in such a manner as to convey to the group a feeling of indifference about the subject taught. The results of the study were as follows. The class mean for the lesson that

was taught for enthusiasm was higher in 19 of the 20 classes. Of the nineteen comparisons, 15 were significant at the .01 level. Rosenshine (1976) suggests that in this study teachers were limited to the technique of lecturing in both the enthusiastic and indifference presentation; movement and variation of voice may be the only behaviors which teachers could use in order to show enthusiasm.

Coats and Smidchens (1966, cited in Rosenshine, 1970) conducted an experiment to support the importance of animation in enhancing comprehension. The researchers of this study had two teachers present lectures in two ways - lethargically and dynamically. The lethargic speaker read the entire lecture from a manuscript. He made no gestures, had no direct eye contact, and kept vocal inflection to a minimum. However, he did speak with good diction and sufficient volume. The dynamic speeches were delivered from memory with much vocal inflection, gesturing, eye contact, and animation of the speaker. The students took a 10 item multiple choice test after each lecture. The mean score of the students who heard the dynamic lecture was significantly higher ($p.<01$) than for the students who heard the lethargic lecture.

Gauger (1951, cited in Rosenshine, 1970) drew similar conclusions on the importance of inflection and the use of gestures used in a presentation. Those students who heard and saw a speaker who used voice inflection and gestures achieved

significantly higher then those who heard and saw a speaker who did not gesture or use voice inflections. This study concluded that statements were remembered significantly more often when accompanied by gesture than when presented in a neutral manner.

Sneed (1977) examined the effects of overt enthusiasm on student achievement. He randomly assigned 112 ninth and tenth-grade students to one of two groups. Two teachers taught two prepared social studies lessons. On the first day, one teacher taught a lesson with high enthusiasm, and the other teacher taught the same lesson with lethargy. On the second day, the teachers reversed enthusiasm levels and taught the second lesson.

On the first day of the study, there was no significant differences on the achievement posttest. There was, however, a significant difference on the second day (high enthusiasm $\bar{X}$=13.75; low enthusiasm $\bar{X}$=11.77). Larkins et al. (1985) states that Sneed attempted to account for the nonsignificant findings on the first day by hypothesizing that students would perhaps listen to a dull lecture for one day with no effects on achievement. The responses to an attitude questionnaire indicated that students could perceive a difference between a lesson taught with enthusiasm and one taught with lethargy. It was also concluded that the students were familiar with the teaching styles of their instructors and were probably aware that something unusual was happening when there were changes in the usual teaching styles.

Larkins and McKinney (1982) conducted two studies on the effects of enthusiasm on social studies for middle school students. The primary purpose was to determine whether three levels of teacher enthusiasm would produce corresponding differences in social studies achievement. Positive results from prior studies (Malcolm, 1977; Sneed, 1977) led the researcher to expect that an increase in teacher enthusiasm would produce an increase in pupil achievement. The study lasted four days. The treatments were rotated across teachers so that each teacher taught each level of treatment. The results indicated that there was no significant differences between the low and normally taught groups. McKinney et al. (1983) reports that the means for both of these groups were significantly larger than the means for the group taught with high overt enthusiasm.

McKinney et al. (1983) concludes that teachers can be trained to increase their levels of overt enthusiasm, they can be trained to appear more or less enthusiastic regardless of their genuine or or felt level of enthusiasm. There appears to be a positive correlation between teacher enthusiasm and achievement at the middle school and high school levels, but less is known about the relationship of teacher enthusiasm and elementary student's achievement.

Early Childhood Enthusiasm Studies

McKinney, Larkins, and Burts (1984) examined the relationship between teacher enthusiasm and student achievement at the first

grade level. The sample consisted of 52 first grade students randomly assigned to one of three treatment groups (high, medium and low overt enthusiasm). The topics of the lessons were air, land, and water pollution. These lessons were conducted by one teacher for three days. Following each lesson a yes-no test was administered. The items were written at the classificatory level; that is subjects were asked to apply what they had learned to newly encountered examples.

The findings in this study indicate a small, but statistically significant relationship. On day 3 and on the composite score, the students who taught with a medium level of teacher enthusiasm performed significantly better than those taught with low and high levels. The researchers in this study noted that the students in the high enthusiasm group appeared to be more disruptive, while the low enthusiasm group displayed more emotion and interest in the lesson than the two other groups.

Burts, McKinney, and Burts (1985) conducted a study with four and five year olds to determine the effects of teacher enthusiasm on this age level. The sample consisted of 55 subjects randomly assigned to one of three treatment groups (high, medium, and low overt enthusiasm). Two teachers conducted the study over an 8 day period. Findings concluded the following results. Subjects who were taught at the high level of enthusiasm were more attentive, more interested, and more responsive than any other group. The four year old subjects taught at the medium level were attentive

and responsive throughout the study. Subjects in the low enthusiasm group were often characterized as restless, bored, and inattentive. No significant differences were found on the individually administered achievement test.

Burts (1985) states that there are several possible explanations why this study did not find that level of teacher enthusiasm affects achievement. One explanation is that because enthusiasm is such an ambiguous human characteristic, it is difficult to accurately measure. The lack of measurable differences could also have been related to the amount of time the teacher spent teaching the subjects. The lessons were brief due to the short attention span of the children, but perhaps the daily contact was not long enough for teacher behavior to make any real difference.

Rosenshine (1979) suggests that high enthusiasm might distract the pupils from the lesson because the pupils will focus upon the animation rather than on the content of the particular lesson presented. Animated behavior may serve as a secondary reinforcer; hearing, and seeing an energetic speaker may positively or negatively reinforce certain responses of the pupils during the lesson. Possibly using puppets, flannel boards, or appropriate "hands-on" materials might be an effective way to allow the early childhood teacher to develop an effective enthusiastic approach. This would allow the young student to have a visual aide to help attend to the lesson presented. Burts et

al. (1985) concludes that further research is needed to help clarify the role of teacher enthusiasm in the educative process.

Listening Comprehension

Good listening skills are especially important in a society that grants freedom of speech to all people, whatever their views or causes (Strother, 1987). Wilts (1950, cited in Choate and Rakes, 1987) reported that nearly 60% of a child's day in elementary school is spent listening. Today children in the primary grades continue to spend a greater proportion of the school day listening (Allen, Brown, & Yatvin, 1986, cited in Choate & Rakes, 1987).

Wolvin and Coakley (1979, cited in Strother, 1987) describes comprehension listening as the ability of the listener to understand a message. Listening is a complex process that varies according to the purpose of the listener and the speaker according to the communication setting and according to a host of other factors including the listener's age, cultural background, self concept, physical, and mental state (Strother, 1987).

Bozik (1986) defines the process of listening as the following. The model is divided into four steps:

1. Sensing: this step includes hearing and seeing. Seeing is an important sense which helps determine the meaning of the message.

2. Interpreting: assigning a meaning to perceived symbols.

Both verbal and non-verbal symbols are decoded to determine what is the message.

3. Evaluation: includes judgments of what was perceived and interpreted. The judgement made is dependent upon the listener's background and purpose.

4. Responding: this component is judged by the achievement of the listener's purpose. This area involves the critical thinking skills of the listener.

> Devine (1982, cited in Abelleira, 1987) found the following: Listening skills in most schools has been neglected. Listening is an intrinsic part of schooling that few educators have bothered to examine it within the total context of teaching and learning. It is so basic to the educational process that most learning theorists are not conscious of it. It plays such a supportive role in the daily drama of most classrooms that many teachers overlook it (p. 1).

Winn (1988) states that children need to learn how to think about and react to what they hear. They need to participate in structured experiences that cause them to question, sort, organize, evaluate, and choose.

Importance of Literature and Reading Aloud in Improving Listening Comprehension

Pearson and Fielding (1982) states that listening to literature tends to improve listening comprehension. Reading

aloud to students provides the teacher with an excellent opportunity to develop listening comprehension. Perhaps the importance of developing listening comprehension is not clearly understood. Funk and Funk (1989) states that providing a purpose for listening is the single most important responsibility of the classroom teacher and one of the most neglected. It is the obligation of a conscientious teacher to guide the comprehension of the literature selected (Shoop, 1987).

Reading aloud affects the full range of language processes. Shoop (1987) states that being read to provides students with an opportunity to be transported across distance and time, to imagine, and to vicariously take part in experiences beyond the realm of the listener. Reading aloud provides the listener with the opportunity to expand one's vocabulary and develop schema through vicarious experiences. Sharing books with students who are not yet able to read independently can motivate children to enjoy literature they might not otherwise enjoy (Smith, 1989). Gray (1987) reports that it is crucial that teachers recognize that there is a gap of knowledge between the student and the author of the text. One of the requirements of choosing a particular selection of literature is to relate the material as much as possible to the student's lives so they may want to learn more and develop an interest in doing so. The reader serves as a bridge joining the author and the student.

Gray (1955, cited in Artley, 1972) discusses reading aloud as

an art in communicating ideas to others. Gray feels reading aloud is an act of interpretation, not a demonstration of the reader's ability to pronounce words. Gray states four significant tasks involved in effective oral interpretation: 1) grasping an author's intended meaning; 2) sensing the mood and emotional reactions which the author intended to produce; 3) conveying the author's intended meaning to a listener; and 4) conveying the mood and feeling. When teachers read aloud to students they become the oral interpreter, and in a figurative sense, serve as a stand-in for the author and through appropriate inflection, emphasize, pauses and expressions, convey to others the feeling or information the reader has secured for himself (Artley, 1975, cited in Blackburn, 1989).

Reading aloud provides experiences that cannot be replicated by other activities. One boy, when asked to describe the best thing about having someone read to him responded that, "If your eyes aren't busy your imagination is free to roam," Mendoza (1985, cited in Smith, 1989).

Reading aloud can make a lasting contribution to helping students become effective and enthusiastic readers (Smith, 1989).

Questions After Reading Aloud:
Developing Listening Comprehension Skills

Questions which follow reading should stimulate thinking about the relevant concepts found in the text. Questions must be carefully asked to elicit the observed levels of listening

comprehension. Literal level questions focus on textually explicit information. The student is asked to recall specific information from the text. Inference level questions requires the student to make some hypotheses about meaning based on what is actually stated in the text. Critical analysis allows the listener to analyze both fact an inferences. The listener's background enters into this level. The listener is comparing his/her view with the writer's views. The creative level allows the listener to make use of what has been learned from a particular literature selection and apply it to his/her own life.

Summary

According to Shoop (1987), reading literature is an important part of a total reading program. Teachers need to realize that children can listen to enjoy a book and at the same time be guided to better comprehension.

Mastin (1963) states that enthusiasm on the part of teachers has a real influence in learning and pupil attitudes. The teacher's enthusiasm towards a particular topic and idea, presented to their classes does influence the factual and inferential learning in their classes.

Based on the literature and research review in this chapter, it is clear that teacher enthusiasm is an important component of effective teaching. The purpose of the present study, therefore, was to determine if enthusiastic teaching has an effect on the listening comprehensive skills of kindergarten children.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Overview of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to determine if reading aloud to kindergarten students with an enthusiastic approach would result in a significant increase in their listening comprehension. The experimental group and control group were read aloud to during their normal "story time". The experimental group was read to with high enthusiasm, which includes voice inflection, facial expression, and appropriate use of gestures. The control group was read to in a low enthusiastic approach, which includes little or no vocal inflection, almost an absence of facial expression, and complete absence of gestures.

Two levels of listening comprehension were tested. These included the literal level of recall (questions focused on textually explicit information) and the creative level, which allows the listener the opportunity to apply the story to his/her own life's experiences.

Within the limitations of this study, an attempt was made to determine if enthusiastic teaching affects the listening comprehension of kindergarten children.

Statement of the Hypotheses

This research project was designed to test the following research and null hypotheses at the .05 level of significance. The research hypothesis states: There is a significant difference

in the listening comprehension of kindergarten students who have been read aloud to in an enthusiastic approach and kindergarten students who have been read aloud to in a lethargic, unenthusiastic approach. The null hypothesis states: There is no significant difference in the listening comprehension of kindergarten students who have been read aloud to in an enthusiastic approach and kindergarten students who have been read aloud to in a lethargic, unenthusiastic approach.

Description of the Sample

The sample of kindergarten population used in this research study consisted of 26 students, 12 girls and 14 boys. These students were part of an intact, heterogeneously assigned kindergarten class in a Southeastern, urban public school. The socioeconomic level of the students was generally middle to upper middle class.

The students in this sample involved in the study were randomly assigned to one of two groups using a random numbers table. One of the two groups became the experimental group, and the other became the control group.

Description of the Instrument

Teacher-made tests were used to measure the listening comprehension of the experimental and control groups. Twelve children's books were read to the entire class. After each piece of literature was completed, the children were administered a five

question written test. The researcher read the questions and the student's circled or drew a picture of the appropriate answer. Four questions were tested on the recall level. The student received a rating of one point for each correct recall response. One question was tested on the creative level. The student received a rating from 0-2 for their answers. Six points was the highest possible score a posttest could receive.

0 equals incorrect; 1 equals partially correct, and 2 equals correct (see Appendix A for posttests).

The Experimental Design

The experimental design chosen to test the hypothesis was the Randomized Control Group Posttest Design (see Table 4). There were 13 subjects in the experimental group and 13 subjects in the control group for a total of 26 kindergarten students who participated in the project from the beginning to the end.

Table 4

Randomized Control Group Posttest Design

Assignment	Group	Number	Treatment	Posttest
R	E	13	X	Y_1
R	C	13	-	Y_1

R: Random Assignment for Groups
E: Experimental Group
C: Control Group
N: Number of Students in Each Group
Y_1: Posttest to Measure Listening Comprehension
X: Enthusiastic Approach

Procedures

The children were randomly assigned to either the control group or the experimental group prior to the experiment. Twelve pieces of literature were selected by the researcher to be read to each group for a 4 week period, 3 days per week. The experimental group was read to in a high enthusiastic approach; the control group was read to in a low enthusiasm approach. The teachers involved in the study included the researcher of this project, who was the classroom teacher, and her co-worker. The children were familiar with the teaching styles of both instructors, therefore, the teacher read to each group for a period of two weeks and then changed groups to minimize teacher effect.

The children in each group were read one selection per day during "story time", which is approximately 9:00 am to 9:20 am daily. A brief explanation was given by the teachers to introduce a particular story selection. The selection was then read aloud to the students in each of their assigned group.

A posttest was administered after each story which included four questions on the recall level and one question on the creative level. Another co-teacher, not involved with the experiment, graded each test daily and reported the results to the researcher of this present study.

Method of Data Analysis

On each of the posttests given, the results were tabulated. For each set of data, the mean score was figured. A separate *t*

test was done to determine whether or not there was a significant difference in the scores of the two groups of each set of posttests. The level of significance was set at .05. The results of this t test were then studied and the conclusions were reached based on the results.

Chapter 4

Results and Conclusions

The statistical data collected during the experimental phase of this study will be reported and discussed in this chapter. Included in the chapter will be a report on the results of the research, a discussion of the results, a review of the limitations of the study, a discussion of the implication of these results for future research and for classroom practice, and some conclusions reached as a result of this study.

Results

The null hypothesis for this research states that there is no significant difference in the listening comprehension of students who have been read aloud to in an enthusiastic approach and kindergarten students who have been read aloud to in a lethargic, unenthusiastic approach. The hypotheses was tested at the .05 level of significance and analyzed by a two-tailed *t*-test for the difference between the mean gain scores of the two groups in this experiment. The statistical results are reported in Table 4.

Table 4

The Means and Standard Deviation of the Experimental and Control Groups After Treatment

Group	Number (n)	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Standard Deviation(S)	t*
E	13	4.36	.68	1.32
C	13	3.99	.70	

*p>.05, two tailed; $t_{.05,24} = 2.064$

E: Randomly assigned experimental groups who listened to stories with an enthusiastic approach.

C: Randomly assigned control group who listened to stories with a lethargic, unenthusiastic approach.

n: Number of students in each group.

S: Standard deviation of test scores.

t: Statistical computation (t-test).

Conclusions

Based upon the data derived from this study of teacher enthusiasm and its effects of listening comprehension of kindergarten students, it has been concluded that there was no significant difference in the listening comprehension of students who have been read aloud to in an enthusiastic approach and kindergarten students who have been read aloud to in a lethargic, unenthusiastic approach.

Limitations

Interpretations of the results of this experiment are limited by the following limitations:

1. The size of the sample used in the study was very small.

2. The length of the time involved in the study was limited to four weeks, three sessions per week.

3. The experimental and control groups were randomly assigned without regard to the listening comprehension skills of each student involved in the study.

4. The students were familiar with the reading styles and personalities of the instructors involved in the experiment.

5. Several of the students were absent for a maximum of three sessions due to illness. The mean score of each student was based on attendance during the study.

Discussion

This study indicated that there was no significant difference in the listening comprehension of kindergarten students who have been read aloud to in an enthusiastic approach and kindergarten students who have been read aloud to in a lethargic, unenthusiastic approach. There are several significant factors which may have contributed to these results.

A larger sample would have allowed for a greater variety of individual differences and for a greater variance in the scores obtained through posttesting. Several children stated that they were familiar with several of the stories that were read during

the study. Possibly this affected the raw scores on specific recall questions. Possibly adding several questions at both the recall and creative level could have affected the raw score averages of the individual students in this present study. Possibly children should have been given a specific purpose for each story that was read. Young children need guidance as to what they are expected to learn from a particular listening activity. Funk (1989) states that this guidance should increase their comprehension and retention abilities.

Implications for Future Research

Although the results of the study revealed that there was no significant difference in the listening comprehension of kindergarten students who have been read aloud to in an enthusiastic approach and the kindergarten students who have been read aloud to in a lethargic, unenthusiastic approach, future research could utilize studies that were conducted by instructors who were unfamiliar to the students. This would allow the researcher to select an enthusiasm instrument, discussed in Section 2 of this report, and rate the teaching styles of the instructors as they read aloud to kindergarten students. The researcher would analyze such factors as: facial expression, voice inflection, hand gestures, and eye contact. Possibly future studies should discuss a specific gesture involved in the process of enthusiastic teaching. The researcher could develop a study

that would rate the importance of a particular gesture and it's effect on early childhood learning.

The literature chosen in future research could develop a thematic selection as opposed to the random selection of literature in the present study. This would increase the continuity of story themes. The study would develop a unit of study. Possibly, the listening comprehension of the students would increase because of the related content of the literature. Each selection would build on previous concepts introduced and therefore, possibly listening comprehension would improve.

Implications for Classroom Practice

Although the results of this study revealed that there was no significant difference in kindergarten students read to in an enthusiastic approach, as opposed to a lethargic approach, there are several implications for classroom teachers. The researcher in this present study observed that the students who were read to with enthusiasm appeared to enjoy the story. The students interacted with the reader and appeared attentive throughout the entire literature selection. The students who were read to in a lethargic approach appeared restless and, at times, bored with the literature. They did not interact with the reader and showed no excitement about the characters, setting, or main ideas of the story. Reading aloud enthusiastically gives the teacher an opportunity to create the story's setting, develop character structure, and develop the plot. An enthusiastic reader allows

the students to see that reading is a pleasurable experience. Manning, Manning, Long, and Wolfson (1987) state that reading aloud should be a natural and enjoyable experience for children. Teachers can create environments where children are able to see the experience of reading as authentic and meaningful. It is through the teacher's enthusiasm that young children are able to get involved with the story.

To see children react with pleasure to a learning situation is the goal of a caring, devoted teacher. Hopefully, successful learning experiences await these students in future years.

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Appendix A

Posttest

Statement of the Validity

The tests used to measure listening comprehension for kindergarten students have been reviewed and have been deemed to have face validity.

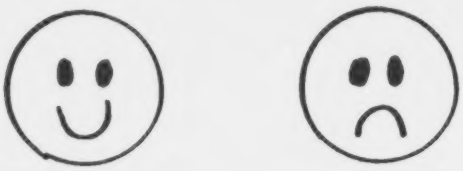
MaryAnn Heather Battey

Bonnie L. Bell

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day.

Name _____

1. Alexander found a surprise in his cereal box.



2. Alexander wanted to move to Atlanta.

3. Alexander was having lima beans for dinner; Alexander hated lima beans.

4. Alexander was having a wonderful, happy, very good day.

5. Draw yourself having a terrible, horrible day.

Caps For Sale

Name _____

1. What was on the peddler's head. Draw a picture.

2. The caps cost 25¢.

3. Draw a picture of where the peddler sat down to rest.

4. Who took the peddler's caps?

5. Draw a picture about you getting into a lot of mischief.

Corduroy

Name _____

1. Corduroy is a story about a

2. Corduroy wore blue overalls

3. Corduroy lost a

4. Lisa took Corduroy home. What did Lisa have for Corduroy?

5. Draw a friend like Corduroy that belongs to you.

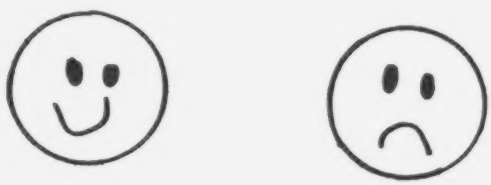
Dandelion

Name _____

1. Dandelion was invited to a Halloween party.

2. Dandelion decided to get all dressed up for the party.

3. Jennifer the Giraffe invited the fancy, dressed up Dandelion to come inside to her party.



4. Dandelion decided at the end of the story he would always just plain me.

5. Draw yourself dressed up going to a party. Where are you going?

If You Take A Paintbrush

Name _____

1. In the story yellow is the color of the:

2. Yellow and blue make:

3. In the story orange is the color of an:

4. What color is the flower in the story?

5. Draw a picture of the weather today. Use the correct colors.

Ira Sleeps Over

Name _____

1. Ira had never slept at a friend's house before.

2. Ira wanted to bring his _____ to Reggie's house.

3. Reggie told Ira that they would tell funny, silly stories before they went to bed.

4. When Reggie got scared, he brought his dog with him to bed.

5. When you are scared, who do you like to hold at night?

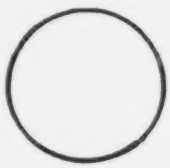
I Know A Lady

Name _____

1. This is a story about a young lady?

2. The lady in the story lives with her family?

3. What does the lady's face look like when the children pass her house coming home?



4. Draw a picture of the cookie the lady gives the children at Christmas.

5. Draw a picture of someone you know who is nice to you. What do you like about them?

Jump Frog Jump

Name _____

1. This is a story about a

2. Circle the picture of the animal that climbed out of the water first.

3. Circle the picture of the animal that dropped from a branch.

4. Circle the picture of who picked up the net.

5. Draw a picture of something that tried to get away from you.

Song and Danceman

Name _____

1. This is a story about Grandpa.

2. Grandpa watched T.V. when he was a little boy.

3. Grandpa takes us to the attic to see if his old coat still fits him.

4. Grandpa wishes the children could have seen him dance in the good old days.

5. Draw a picture of something your Grandpa did when he was young.

The Day The Teacher Went Bananas

Name _____

1. The new teacher in the class was a:

2. When it was time for arithmetic we counted with our fingers.

3. Draw a picture of what the teacher ate for lunch.

4. The principal said, "There has been a mix-up". Draw a picture of the classes new teacher who was sent to the zoo by mistake.

5. Draw a picture of you going "bananas".

The Doorbell Rang

Name _____

1. What did Ma make for Victoria and Sam to eat? Draw a picture.

2. Victoria and Sam counted the cookies. They would each have five to eat.

3. Circle the picture of what kept ringing.

4. Ma made an enormous tray of cookies for everyone to share.

5. Draw a picture of something you would like to share with a friend.

Where The Wild Things Are

Name _____

1. Max was behaving so his mom sent him to his room.

2. Draw a picture of what grew in Maxi's room.

3. The wild things made Max a king.

4. When Max came back to his room he found his toys waiting for him.

5. Draw a picture of yourself doing something WILD.

Appendix B

Children's Literature Bibliography

The following books were the stories read aloud to the kindergarten students during the four week experiment. The books were selected by the researcher of the present study.

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Appendix C

Individual Mean Score and Mean Average Scores

For Group C and Group E

Experimental Group E

Student	$\bar{X}$	$(X-\bar{X})$
1	4.18	- .18
2	4.91	.55
3	4.50	.14
4	4.58	.22
5	3.60	- .76
6	3.40	- .96
7	3.00	-1.36
8	4.90	.54
9	4.54	.18
10	5.25	.89
11	4.00	- .36
12	4.77	.42
13	5.08	.72

$n = 13$

$\bar{X} = 4.36$

Control Group C

Student	$\bar{X}$	$(X-\bar{X})$
14	3.83	- .16
15	3.16	- .83
16	3.75	- .24
17	3.90	- .09
18	3.80	- .19
19	4.08	.09
20	3.83	- .16
21	5.08	1.09
22	4.18	.19
23	4.30	.31
24	5.08	1.09
25	4.00	.01
26	2.91	-1.08

$n = 13$

$\bar{X} = 3.99$

Appendix D

Statistical Computations

H_R: There is a significant difference in the listening comprehension of kindergarten students who have been read aloud to in an enthusiastic approach.

H_0: There is no significant difference in the listening comprehension of kindergarten students who have been read aloud to in a lethargic, unenthusiastic approach.

Level of Significance: .05

Standard deviation calculated for Experimental Group (E):

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{\Sigma x^2}{n-1}}$$

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{5.69}{12}}$$

$$S = \sqrt{.47}$$

$$S = .68$$

Standard deviation calculated for Control Group (C):

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{\Sigma x^2}{n-1}}$$

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{5.94}{12}}$$

$$S = \sqrt{.49}$$

$$S = .70$$

Criteria for Accepting the Null Hypothesis H_0:

$t < 2.064$

$d.f. = n + n - 2$
$= 13 + 13 - 2$
$= 24$

$$t = \frac{\overline{X}^1 - \overline{X}^2}{\sqrt{\frac{(n_1-1)\ S_1^2 + (n_2-1)\ S_2^2}{n_1 + n_2 - 2} \quad \frac{1 + 1}{n_1 \quad n_2}}}$$

$$t = \frac{4.36 - 3.99}{\sqrt{\frac{(13-1)\ .68^2 + (13-1)\ .70^2}{13+13-2} \quad \frac{1 + 1}{13 \quad 13}}}$$

$$t = \frac{.37}{\sqrt{\frac{12\ (.47)\ 12\ (.49)\ (.08+.08)}{24}}}$$

$$t = \frac{.37}{\sqrt{\frac{5.64 + 5.88\ (.16)}{24}}}$$

$$t = \frac{.37}{\sqrt{\frac{11.52\ (.16)}{24}}}$$

$$t = \frac{.37}{\sqrt{\frac{1.84}{24}}}$$

$$t = \frac{.37}{\sqrt{.076}}$$

$$t = \frac{.37}{.28}$$

$t = 1.32$

$t = .05, 24 = 2.064$
$1.32 < 2.064$